DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 179 EA 030 425

AUTHOR Clement, Mieke; Vandenberghe, Roland
TITLE How School Leaders Can Promote Teachers' Professional Development: An Account from the Field.
PUB DATE 2000-04-00
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, Louisiana, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Leadership Styles; *Professional Development; *Supervisors; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS *Belgium

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the collegial relationship between school leaders and teachers, and describes the very specific policies behind the school leader's influence on teachers' professional development. In the first phase, 39 teachers from 11 schools were interviewed regarding the teachers' perceptions of their personal professional development and professional relationships with other team members. In the second phase, a case study was made of two Flemish schools to analyze the relationships between the concepts explored in the first phase and the patterns that could be discerned in these relationships. The hypothesis that teachers' professional development depends not only on the individual teacher's commitment but also on several workplace conditions was confirmed. The teachers' perceptions of the way school leaders function appears to be an important parameter for the appreciation of the contribution of the school to the process of professional development. The paper recommends that one should get closer to the participants in the leadership relationship and argues for a symbolic "interactionist" approach paying full attention to the meanings, perspectives, and purposes underlining the social relations between school leaders and teachers. (Contains 31 references.) (DFR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 442 179

How school leaders can promote teachers' professional development. An account from the field.

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA, New Orleans, April 2000

Mieke Clement
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Dienst Universitair Onderwijs
Naamsestraat 98
B - 3000 Leuven
Belgium

tel + 32 16 32 65 51
e-mail mieke.clement@duo.kuleuven.ac.be

Roland Vandenberghe
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Center for Educational Policy and Innovation
Vesaliusstraat 2
B – 3000 Leuven
Belguim

Tel + 32 16 32 62 47
e-mail roland.vandenberghe@ped.kuleuven.ac.be

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

M. Clement

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Schools and school leaders nowadays are experiencing a growing pressure to deliver high quality education. There exists consensus that teachers should be encouraged and supported within the school context to develop professionally in order to deliver this (Little, 1992). Since a few decades it is indeed generally accepted that teachers' professional development is not simply a matter of individual characteristics (see also Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994). It can not be disconnected from the context within which it takes place. In the early '90s Huberman - following the research tradition of (life-)stage theories - described the stages of professional development. The attention he paid to the subjective meanings teachers attach to this process, allowed him to indicate which conditions favour professional development. Teachers have a greater chance to enjoy an harmonious career, if they work in a school context that encourages some experimentation without the threat of punishment if one is not successful. Besides that the possibility to take on new tasks without loss of wages and the access to the expertise of colleagues in and outside the school are important organisational triggers for professional development (Huberman, 1993).

Research in the teacher-thinking tradition also reveals which elements of the school culture contribute to teachers' professional development to reflective practitioners. Lieberman (1994) states that norms of collegiality, trust and openness are crucial. Teachers should be stimulated to reflect critically on their practice, together with colleagues. A collaborative school culture with shared leadership and professional networking holds the best prospects - according to Lieberman - for the development of teachers' knowledge and beliefs.

The conclusions that can be drawn from research in the socialisation-tradition follow the same line. A case study of four beginning teachers of Wildman, Niles, Magliaro and McLaughlin (1989) points at the factors that play a role in teachers' socialisation. Among others, the colleagues and the school context are described as important determinants of this process. The way classes are ascribed to teachers, the leadership style, the curriculum and the collegial relationships among the teachers all have an influence on their socialisation.

Research of workplace conditions (Kirby & Colbert, 1992; Louis & Smith, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1994) helps us to summarise which organisational characteristics foster teachers' professional development. Generally, a distinction is made between structural and cultural workplace conditions1.

Structural workplace conditions refer to the organisational, structural measures one can take in order to foster teachers' professional development. It is important, for instance, that teachers can dispose of adequate teaching materials, yet the presence of materials does not guarantee professional development. Teachers should also have the possibility to participate in the decision making process so that they can exert some influence on the organisation of their work. The feelings of control and satisfaction that originate from this participation, contribute to teachers' willingness to develop professionally. Even more, participation in decision making also encourages teachers to collaborate and this can add opportunities for professional development. A last structural workplace condition worth mentioning is the evaluation of teachers. It is

argued that the evaluation should be frequent and specific in order to foster development. Teachers should get accurate information about the impact and effects of their work. This leads to feelings of efficacy and as such to a greater engagement with regard to professional development. For that matter the evaluation should be 'investing' also. It should reward teachers for development, for taking risk and for change, instead of only looking for successes of the past. A good evaluation should encourage teachers' professional development by confronting them with new challenges or tasks.

Cultural workplace conditions refer to the values of the school with regard to professional behaviour and professional development. Many authors point at the importance of a problem solving attitude in the school. When this value lives in the school, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their teaching practice. They feel safe to experiment with innovations and improvements of their practice. If they encounter certain problems or when the school has to react to new societal requirements, the team reacts as a whole, starting from a collective sense of responsibility. An individual's problem is seen as a problem of the school. Another important cultural workplace condition is the collective goal-setting. Clear, collective goals create shared expectations. They foster solidarity. They make it possible for teachers to weigh the quality of their own teaching against a collective norm and consequently give impulses for teachers to improve their practice. Finally, collegiality is considered important. Smoothly running collaborative relationships lead to greater involvement and a stronger sense of responsibility for the quality of the education from the side of the teachers. Collegiality challenges teachers' professionally because colleagues function for one another as a source of feedback, support and alternative ideas.

Evidently school leaders seem to be best situated within the school organisation to create these conditions (Leithwood, 1992; Staessens, 1993; Vandenberghe, 1992). They are supposed to play a crucial role in teachers' professional development (Glanz & Neville, 1997; Leithwood, 1994; Sheppard, 1996). Yet, if they would commit themselves to create these conditions it remains an open question whether they would be successful. The description of "what works" that can be found in the literature seems not always to reveal why nor how certain workplace conditions exert such a positive influence on teachers' development. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to answer other questions such as:

How do teachers appreciate the school's influence on their professional development?
What meaning do teachers attach to their school leader's influence on their professional development?
How can we understand the impact of the school leader on this process?
Along which specific processes and mechanisms do the workplace conditions the school leaders create contribute to teachers' professional development?

The data gathered in a study of the impact of the tension between autonomy and collegiality on teachers' professional development (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000) allow us to formulate an answer to these questions. In this paper we will focuss on a workplace condition that is considered extremely important for

teachers' professional development: collegiality. We will confine the discussion to the collegial relationship between the school leader and the teachers. After a brief description of the methodology used, a general account is given of the way teachers experience the impact of the school (leader) on their professional development. Then we present the results that help us to understand the origins of this appreciation. As such we will describe the very specific processes behind the school leader's influence on teachers' professional development (something Blase and Blase (1998) pleaded for). We also follow the recommendations by Greenfield (1999), stating that we should get closer to the participants in the leadership relationship and arguing for a symbolic interactionist approach playing full attention to the meanings, perspectives and purposes underlying the social relations between school leaders and teachers.

Methodology

The data reported here are part of a study that consisted of three phases in which, respectively, the exploration of the research themes, the development of a substantial theory and the test of the external validation of the theory were the main focus (see also Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000).

The results presented refer to the first and second phase of the study. In the first phase 39 teachers of 11 schools were interviewed in a semi-structured way. The interview explored the teachers' perception of their personal professional development and of the professional relationships with the other team members. In the second phase an extensive case study was made of two of these schools in order to analyse the relations between the concepts explored in the first phase and the patterns that could be discerned in these relations. The researcher spent five weeks in each of the schools and interviewed in total 23 teachers besides the two school leaders.

Some 'technical' criteria, such as the representativeness of the schools for the Flemish situation with regard to school size and their location and to the sex and number of years of experience of the teachers, were taken into account to select schools, interviewees and situations. Yet the sampling strategy was mainly a theoretical one. Arguments of content determined the final selection. Cases as well as interviewees differed from one another at the level of important research variables (Schoffield, 1990). For instance, the two case study schools were selected out of the sample participating in the first research phase because they differed from each other with regard to the importance of the school leader for the professional development of the teachers.

In order to analyse the research data a two step strategy was used. First a 'vertical' analysis of the data was made. In order to gain insight in the what, how and why of teachers' perceptions of their professional development and of the settings, the interviews, observational notes, documents and research diary fragments were carefully analysed. First all the data were coded, then they were displayed in matrices (see

Miles & Huberman, 1994) so that they could be compared systematically. The second step of the analysis, the 'horizontal' analysis dealt with the comparison among teachers (for the first phase) and settings (for the second). A case oriented approach was adopted here. The typical patterns found in each setting were compared with one another to "discover whether a pattern found in one site plays out in others as well, suggesting a common scenario." (Huberman & Miles, 1989, p.64)

The analyses obtained were validated in a communicative way (Kvale, 1994). Teachers were invited to read and comment upon the vertical analysis of their interview. The 'story' of each school was presented to the school leader and three 'key informants' (and if they agreed the whole team). Two main questions guided this validation process: 1) do you agree with the facts as they are reported, and 2) do you agree with the interpretation of these facts developed by the researcher? Using this criterion, we followed Yin (1989, p.144), who states: "The informants and participants may still disagree with an investigator's conclusions and interpretations, but these reviewers should not disagree over the actual facts of the case."

Results

How do teachers appreciate the school (leader) 's influence on their professional development?

The interviews of 39 teachers in 11 primary schools demonstrate that teachers evaluate the contribution of the school (leader) to their professional development in three ways.

Some teachers are not impressed by the contribution of their school to their professional development. They are convinced that their school does not add anything essential. Collegial interactions are limited to social small talk. In the rare cases colleagues do collaborate, the "rule of privacy" (Lieberman & Miller, 1990) is not broken. One is allowed to pass on some teaching materials or to complain about the school or the pupils in very general terms. It is however not accepted to discuss with colleagues specific teaching methods or problems. The school leader seems not to be able to change these patterns. The teachers get the feeling their school leader does not trust them. He does not launch interesting discussions. He does not monitor (personal) initiatives teachers take. He rather focuses on projects which are at great distance of what teachers are concerned about in their own classes. A teacher comments: "During one year the focus is on that subject and during the following year another subject is the central theme. You try to do something about it because the school leader asks you. We do it because we have to. You have to note it down in your classbook It annoys me, really, but I do it because I have to."

A second group of teachers expresses the opinion that there can exist interesting possibilities for professional development in school. They consider it an advantage that the offer is made free. They can respond to those challenges they label interesting, but there us no pressure to engage. These teachers feel stimulated by their colleagues. They offer new ideas in a climate of openness and trust. The school leader sustains this culture by passing through relevant information, by allowing teachers to participate in in-service training, by buying

relevant professional journals, by discussing interesting innovations at meetings. Above all, the teachers appreciate the school leader's trust. With respect for their professionality the school leader makes an offer that the teachers can freely engage in (or not) and that is monitored at distance: "And then there is our school leader ... She really is very good. She's terribly interested in innovations and she always tries to motivate you to implement them. Yet at the same time she lets you free. She knows you're experimenting with something and she trusts you. She stimulates you and she understands nothing can be perfect right from the start. She accepts that." To put it in the terms of Wideen (1992), the school leader supports teachers' professional development through organisational and structural conditions. A conceptual leadership in which the norms and expectations with regard to professional development are clearly communicated makes these conditions even stronger.

Finally there is a group of teachers that is convinced that their school stimulates and orientates their professional development. These teachers feel challenged by their colleagues. Teaching methods and problems are discussed. Colleagues are available to offer help when one is in trouble. Teachers point at the fact that they can learn from one another during meetings. The school leader is very explicit in what he expects from the teachers. They know which requirements they have to respond to. They are obliged to take certain responsibilities (like for instance leading a meeting, preparing a discussion about an innovation, making a planning for the implementation of an innovation). A teacher comments: "We work very hard during our team meetings. For instance, we were confronted with this new theme of traffic education. We talk about it at the meeting and then afterwards I really bury myself in it. If it wouldn't have been a point of attention at the meeting, one wouldn't start thinking about it. But now this traffic education gets its shape. Every year we deal with something else and we work very hard."

These data confirm the hypothesis that teachers' professional development does not only depend upon their individual commitment. Several workplace conditions also play a substantial role. The teachers' perception of the way the school leader functions appears to be an important parameter for the appreciation of the contribution of the school to the process of professional development. It remains however an open question which specific patterns and processes in the functioning of the school leader explain this impact. To answer this question we need full descriptions of the functioning of the workplace conditions that foster professional development. An in depth description of the way school leaders and teachers shape these conditions will help us to understand their impact.

In the following section we present the results of two case studies of two suburban Flemish primary schools. We focus on the workplace condition "collegiality" and confine ourselves to the relationship between the school leader and the teachers. After a brief description of the workplace condition we go into the question why it does (not) favour teachers' professional development.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Why school leaders have an impact on teachers' professional development.

Collegiality as a test-case

As described in the introduction, collegiality is generally considered an important workplace condition to foster professional development. After a period in which collegiality was presented as a solution for all problems schools were confronted with (like lack of continuity over the years, lack of commitment to innovations, staff turnover ...), research made clear that a differentiated view on this workplace condition is necessary (Little, 1987). Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) and McLaughlin (1994), among others, have described the strength of collaborative cultures that leave room for help, support, trust and openness. Yet at the same time they have pointed at the importance of the appreciation within such cultures for teachers' autonomy (see also Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000).
The following description of the interactions between the school leader and the teachers at Heathlandpool and Writerscourt confirms that collegiality not only is a varied workplace condition (as Little (1990) demonstrated), but also that it can not be disconnected from the way teachers' autonomy gets its place.

When one analyses the relationship between the teachers and the school leader of Heathlandpool, one gets an impression of a richly varied collegiality. The teachers and school leader tell each other stories during the breaks and in the corridors. These stories can have the character of noncommittal small talk: teachers and school leaders discuss the weather, their family business or politics. Often these stories grow out to a sharing of ideas with regard to the school. The school leader comments upon initiatives the teachers take. Together with the remedial teacher she participates in the consultation of teachers of the first and second grade about the reading levels of the pupils. The teachers appreciate the fact that they can discuss easily educational issues with the school leader. In general they don't find it difficult to ask for help. The school leader actively provides help. She passes through information to teachers who are interested in a certain topic. She gives some tips and advice for excursions, she comments on a preparation of a lesson, she gives advice with regard to the results of the pupils. What is essential for this collaboration is that it creates opportunities for the teachers and the school leader to share their very personal opinions and beliefs about teaching. Yet at the same time the collegiality between the school leader and the teachers leaves enough room for teachers to work independently. They don't have the feeling that the collaboration with their school leader impedes them to maintain their identity. One could rather say that their autonomy offers opportunities for collegial exchanges. Teachers' personal initiatives are often a start to ask for help or to share some ideas. Collegial interactions on their turn often are a source of inspiration for autonomous work.

The image one gets form the relationship between the school leader and the teachers at Writersourt is a totally different one. Teachers feel not inclined to label their collegial interactions with the school leader in a positive way. They have the feeling that they cannot get any help from him. According to the teachers he

does not have an open mind for what they realise in their classroom. A teacher tells: "He never has a chat with you. I regret that." The teachers also have the feeling that they cannot share personal opinions with their school leader. A teacher points out it would be unthinkable to discuss an article he considered very interesting about the pressure on pupils to achieve the best results. The school leader doesn't encourage collaboration because of a lack of follow up. During team meetings one can often note that the intention is formulated to elaborate certain projects with a small group of interested colleagues. Yet, after the meeting everybody, the school leader included, seems to forget about it. It seems to be very difficult at Writerscourt to get engaged with the whole team to work out the idea of one colleague. The school leader is not perceived here as the one who could play a motivating role for that matter. Collegial interactions between the school leader and the teachers are very scarce and offer hardly any possibility to discuss personal ideas and beliefs about teaching. The teachers are left to their own devices. Their autonomous work does not form a start for collegial interactions with the school leader and - vice versa - the very scarce collegial exchanges do not offer new impulses for their autonomous work.

Learning opportunities and learning space: the missing links

These data illustrate that collegiality between school leaders and teachers can take different forms. One could also suppose that the teachers of Heathlandpool would consider the contribution of their school leader to their professional development as stimulating or at least inviting, while the teachers of Writerscourt would label it as irrelevant. Yet the description of the workplace condition as such does not reveal how exactly its (lack of) influence on teachers' professional development can be understood. The case study results demonstrate that two elements play a crucial role. The creation of learning opportunities and learning space determines whether a workplace condition - i.e. collegiality - favours professional development. One can say that all workplace conditions would lead to learning opportunities and learning space (see also McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). Not only should workplace conditions be characterised by the presence of learning opportunities, i.e. every possible stimulus, challenge, support and feedback that offers teachers the opportunity to acquire skills and to experiment new things. Workplace conditions should also be designed in such a way that they offer teachers enough adequate learning space. Teachers should get the chance to effectively do something with the opportunities they get. Indeed, when learning opportunities and learning space are closely tuned to each other, learning experiences in several domains originate. These learning experiences, which make teachers experience and handle things in a different way, are the milestones for their professional development.
The data gathered in Heathlandpool and Writerscourt illustrate this point.

Looking at the relationship between the school leader and the teachers at Heathlandpool, one can conclude that the majority of the interactions between the school leader and the teachers is dominated by the creation of learning opportunities. In answer to specific questions or in general teachers receive interesting

information: "We find it in our personal box then. You take a look at it and maybe it is interesting. We get it all, everything about which she thinks 'O, that could be interesting', is copied and put in our box." The teachers can ask the school leader for feedback on their pedagogical activities or on the way they interact with their pupils. Sometimes, the school leader comments spontaneously on teachers' work. Another way to confront teachers with learning opportunities consists in giving them some specified tasks. The school leader asigns tasks in order to prepare the team meetings. The teachers are supposed to read certain texts that are afterwards discussed at the meeting in small groups. Themes as the new curriculum for some subjects, the organisation of the school, mastery learning, the frequency and meaning of assignments for pupils, a project about the environment, children with calculation problems, how to correct tests and assignments and so on offer stimuli to reflect on and improve one's professional practice. The school leader's attention to create professional challenges for her teachers is also obvious in her encouragement to take some in-service courses.

Not only are teachers in their collegial relationship with the school leader confronted with learning opportunities, they also have learning space at their disposal to work with these learning opportunities. Organisational measures are taken so that teachers can do something with the opportunities they get. From a structural point of view the accurately organised consultation is very important in this respect. Two times a week teachers teaching the same grade are "class free" so that they can collaborate. This gives them time and space to get involved with learning opportunities. At the cultural level it is important that teachers are recognised as professionals who can decide for themselves what to do with the opportunities offered. A teacher states: "She demands things from us, but not too much. I believe we're rather free, because she is not always there to control you." The so-called lack of control is not so much perceived as a lack of interest, but rather as a sign of trust: "You can do whatever you want, as long as you can account for it. She lets you free. You can experiment, you can everything ..."

The consequence of this tuning in of learning opportunities and learning space is that many fundamental learning experiences originate from this adjustment. A teacher tells for instance that she learned a lot about organising activities for the pupils of all classes, thanks to the critical support of the school leader - she is indeed "very open minded for the initiatives you take". Another teacher is still grateful to the school leader because she offered him the opportunity to become language co-ordinator for the school: "I did it for a while and it was very nice. You can learn a lot there ..."

Learning experiences can be situated at the level of the work in the classroom. A demonstration lesson of the school leader about group techniques for reading encouraged a teacher to organise his class into small groups in order to invite the pupils to discuss their solutions for certain tasks: "I thought by myself, hey, why to use this techniques only for reading? If someone has written down a certain solution, why couldn't we discuss about why exactly he wrote that answer down?" This teacher is very happy with the improvement this caused in his professional practice: "I'm a bit proud of it, there are moments I could make a little walk so

to say, the children are correcting their work together. They talk about it: 'I've got that solution', 'I've got that one' ..." Another teacher tells that he "learned at this school - and this is something our school leaders told us - to keep the moments of instruction as short as possible." Bob states that he learned to work with discussion circles, reading assignments and analyses of wrong answers. The teacher of the sixth grade integrated an overview of the day's activities at the beginning of each day after a team meeting where the importance of listening was dealt with. The teacher of the fourth grade started to work with differentiated tasks. He clearly indicated that adequate support - through the creation of learning space - by means of an explanation about how to work with these exercises - was indispensable to let the learning opportunity offered - the acquisition of the materials on demand of the teachers - evolve to a learning experience: "Yeah, this differentiation. Well, this is something that was explained to us here. You know in the past ... when we asked for some material we thought that would be interesting, sometimes it was nothing more than: 'here you get them, go on and work with it'. Sometimes you put it in your cupboard for a year ... until you get some explanation at a meeting, then you thought: 'hey, this is interesting indeed, I am going to work with it'. From that moment on, you really use it."

In general the teachers of Writerscourt agree that they are confronted with very little learning opportunities in their relationship with the school leader. They hardly get any feedback on their work. There are no requirements set. They don't have to account for what they do. The school leader limits his help to mere practical interventions (like for instance lending a hand to build the scene for the school play).
One can discern two patterns in this relationship with regard to learning opportunities and learning space: on the one hand there seems to be little attention for the creation of learning opportunities; on the other hand potential learning opportunities are not fully exploited because they are not enough supported by an adequate learning space.

First pattern: lack of attention for the creation of leaning opportunities

The lack of attention for the creation of professional challenges becomes sharply clear in the way beginning teachers are welcomed at Writerscourt. A beginning teacher tells the following story about her appointment: "Just see you can keep order, he told me. Nothing more. I didn't have a real talk with him. He came at my home and asked me: 'Do you have a job already?' 'No' 'O, I've a job for you for one school year.' In the evening I could come to him and at the front door he asked me: 'The third or the fourth grade?' 'Ok, the fourth' . The decision was taken and that was it. He only told me at what time I had to be in the playground in the morning. Only the practical stuff, you see. Besides that he didn't tell me anything about what he wanted ..." Once the beginning teachers are there, they are hardly followed by the school leader: "There is no real follow up. In my previous school, the school leader really kept track of what you did in your classroom. That gave a lot of support. You know they're interested in you. I don't really miss it now, you know, but it would be nice of there was some support."

Class visits are scarce, nor are they dealt with as an opportunity to discuss some professional issues. Most of the times there is no time for feedback: "He visited my class once, in October, I believe. He made a report. I had to sign it, but I didn't get the chance to read it properly. Well, I could read it, but it passed so quickly. He took the paper back immediately. I think it was a pity. He didn't tell me what was good, what I needed to change, or that it wasn't good. I'd prefer he'd come a bit more and would tell me what is good or what is bad. I can take that. But now I wonder 'Am I doing right?' 'Did I do something wrong?' or ..." The limited comments of the school leader demonstrate that he sees professional development as gaining experience in practical, technical matters. A teacher ad interim tells: "The use of abbreviations in grammar: in one school it is like this, in the other it's like that. Our school leader ascertains you learn it through experience. He told me it is normal you don't know this when you arrive in a school, but that I should know it after two weeks." When a replacement is finished, the teachers ad interim do not receive feedback.

Not only the beginning teachers and their colleagues ad interim state that they are not challenged through the class visits of the school leader. The other teachers are not enthusiastic too. They label the class visits as scarce and not constructive. The school leader's comments are not directed at concrete aspects of teachers' professional functioning that could be ameliorated. Teachers feel hardly encouraged by it: "He controlled me only once and it was like a bouquet, his comments. It's nice to read of course, but according to me it is not possible that everything is wonderful, fantastic and great and ..."

Second pattern: no support for learning opportunities by the creation of a learning space

A second pattern that appears in the relationship school leader - teachers at Writerscourt with regard to learning opportunities and learning space, refers to the fact that potential learning opportunities are too inadequately supported by a learning space in order to lead to fundamental learning experiences.

In the scarce cases that teachers ask the school leader for some advice, they are not encouraged to reflect critically upon their own teaching behaviour. The following observational data illustrate this: "The school leader gives some advice to the fifth grade teacher about a child that cried when it received his report, with a bad score for one subject. Or the child uses the wrong study method, or it's basket is full. When the teacher rejects this last hypothesis: 'I doubt it, last time he had a seven, now only a one', the school leader continues on the track of the wrong study method. He advises the teacher to let the pupil study the subject all over again and to interrogate him afterwards."

A teacher's concerns about the national exams do not form a starting point for a discussion about his professional functioning, even though this teacher teaches the sixth grade for the first time: "Well, I first asked him about that national exam what it is exactly, because I don't know it. He told me you can't prepare for it, because the test covers ready knowledge only. But that isn't true, is it. The subject matters you dealt with in het sixth grade should be repeated in order to prepare for the exam. I experienced it recently, I asked some questions about the beginning if the year and nobody knew the answer. So, how should I prepare them for the exam? 'Finally, it is easier than what they got during the year', that's what our school leader has to

say." The evolution of potential learning opportunities to concrete learning experiences is in both cases hindered because no adequate learning space is created to work with these chances.
The same pattern occurs at the school level. At the staff meeting the school leader launches the idea to work at a mission statement for the school. A small group is formed to formulate a first draft of this statement, but finally it never comes together. What could have become a interesting challenge, is lost because of a lack of follow up. The school leader supports the idea to organise a week of classes at the seaside for the sixth grade. He doesn't take the chance however to make from this plan a challenge for the teachers. On the contrary, he advises them to use existing programmes instead of inventing new ones. The implementation of new teaching methods is the focus of several moments of consultation at the team meetings. The school leader, however, does not seem to find it necessary to intervene when some teachers are alarmed in the team because one colleague doesn't follow the new manuals. An open discussion about this problem could create a chance to learn about each other's opinions and beliefs concerning education. The school leader doesn't structure the learning space enough for teachers to work with this opportunity in a constructive way.

The lack of tuning in of learning opportunities and learning space resulting from both patterns, leads to a very limited number of concrete learning experiences. Only one teacher of Writerscourt testifies to have learned something thanks to the class visits of the school leader: "I learned something from it. When you deal with fractions, you should involve all children. Not only make a drawing at the blackboard ... I believe that was an interesting comment. I never forgot it." In most cases teachers can only rely on themselves with regard to their professional development: "You are not supported by the school leader. If he'd told you what could be better, than you would work for it. I believe it has to come more from yourself now." This situation is not really fostering for professional development. The teachers are disappointed.

Conclusion

It is accepted for quite a while that school leaders can and should play a role in teachers' professional development. Their commitment to create favourable workplace conditions is seen as a guarantee that schools will be/stay able to react adequately to new societal and educational challenges through the development of teachers. The literature leaves no doubt as to what workplace conditions contribute to this development. Collegiality, for instance, seems to be crucial. Up until now, however, the reasons why collegiality between the school leader and the teachers is favourable for professional development were formulated only in a rather general, almost taken for granted way. A description of the specific interactions between school leaders and teachers helps us to better understand this influence. In Heathlandpool the collegiality between the school leader and the teachers is richly varied and does not deny teachers' autonomy. This constellation makes it possible not only that many learning opportunities originate, but also that the teachers can dispose of a learning space to work with these opportunities. The result is that teachers are convinced that they learn a lot in their relationship with the school leader. The teachers of Writerscourt,

on the contrary, report very few learning experiences in their relationship with the school leader. An explanation can be found in the fact that the collegial interactions between both are very scarce. Autonomy is the dominant way of functioning, so it seems. The data also illustrate the point that the influence of collegiality on the professional development is so poor because there are no learning opportunities created and because the scarce learning opportunities that do exist are not supported by a learning space.

Altogether the results of both case studies make clear that a close look at the participants in the leadership relationship and at the way they are interacting helps us to understand why school leaders can contribute to teachers' professional development through the creation of workplace conditions. Creating learning opportunities and learning space and tuning them both seems to be the key for success for school leaders. Doing this they act along the principles of transformative leadership (van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1999) in which they inspire the team and support individual teachers. As such they really invest in people. As van den Berg and Vandenberghe (1999) demonstrated this is one of the most efficient strategies to implement innovations successfully.

1 The difference between structural and cultural workplace conditions is somewhat artificial. All structural workplace conditions have a cultural side and vice versa.

2 Quotations in italics are statements of the respondents. In the translation we tried to affect the original meaning as little as possible.

References

Blase, J. & Blase, J. (1998). *Handbook of instructional leadership. How really good principals promote teaching and learning.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Clement, M. & Vandenberghe, R. (2000). Teachers' professional development: a solitary or collegial (ad)venture? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*, 81-101.

Fullan, M.G. & Hargreaves, A. (1992). *What is worth fighting for in your school?* Ballmoor: Open University.

Glanz, J. & Neville, R.F. (1997). *Educational supervision: Perspectives, issues and controversies.* Norwood: Christopher-Gordon.

Greenfield, W.D. Jr. (1999). *Moral leadership in schools: Fact or fancy.* (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA, Montréal)

Huberman, A.M. (1993). Steps toward a developmental model of the teaching career. In L. Kremer-Hayon, H.C. Vonk & R. Fessler (Eds.), *Teacher professional development: A multiple perspective approach.* (pp. 93-118) Amsterdam: Swetz & Zeitlinger.

Huberman, A.M. & Miles, M.B. (1989). Some procedures for causal analysis of multiple-case data. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 2*(1), 55-68.

Kelchtermans, G. & Vandenberghe, R. (1994). Teachers' professional development: A biographical perspective *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 26*(1), 45-62.

Kirby, P.C. & Colbert, R. (1992). *Principals who empower teachers.* (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA, San Francisco)

Kvale, S. (1994). *Validation as communication and action. On the social construction of validity.* (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA, New Orleans)

Leithwood, K. (1992). The principal's role in teacher development. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change.* (pp.86-103) London: Falmer.

Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 30*(4), 498-518.

Lieberman, A. (1994). Teacher development: Commitment and challenge. In P.P. Grimmett & J. Neufeld (Eds.), *Teacher development and the struggle for authenticity. Professional growth and restructuring in the context of change* (pp.15-30) New York: Teachers College.

Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (1990). The social realities of teaching. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now.* (pp. 153-163) London: Falmer.

Little, J.W. (1987). Teachers as colleagues. In V. Richardson-Koehler (Ed.), *Educators' handbook: A research perspective.* (pp. 491-518) New York: Longman.

Little, J.W. (1990). The persistance of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teachers College Record, 91*(4), 509-536.

Little, J.W. (1992). Teacher development and educational policy. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change.* (pp. 170-193) London: Falmer.

Louis, K.S. & Smith, B. (1990). Teacher working conditions. In P. Reyes (Ed.), *Teachers and their workplace. Commitment, performance and productivity.* (pp.23-47) Newburry Park: Sage.

McLaughlin, M.W. (1994). Strategic sites for teachers' professional development. In P.P. Grimmett & J. Neufeld (Eds.), *Teacher development and the struggle for authenticity. Professional growth and restructuring in the context of change.* (pp. 31-51) New York: Teachers College.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

McLaughlin, & Yee, (1988). School as a place to have a career. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools.* (pp. 23-44) New York: Teachers College.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis. An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Rosenholtz, S.J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace. The social organization of schools.* New York: Longman.

Schofield, J. W. (1990). Increasing generalizability of qualitative research. In W.E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education. The continuing debate.* (pp. 201-232) New York: Teachers College.

Sheppard, B. (1996). Exploring the transformational nature of instructional leadership. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 42*(4), 325-344.

Smylie, M. (1994). Redesigning teachers' work: Connections to the classroom. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review in research of education (20).* (pp. 129-177) Washington: American Educational Research Association.

Staessens, K. (1993). The professional culture at "The Cornflower". In F.K. Kieviet & R. Vandenberghe (Eds.), *School culture, school improvement and teacher development.* (pp. 7-38) Leiden: DSWO.

Vandenberghe, R. (1992). *Creative management of a school: A matter of vision and daily interventions.* (paper presented at the second National Management Congress, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg)

van den Berg, R. & Vandenberghe, R. (1999). *Succesvol leiding geven aan onderwijsinnovaties. Investeren in mensen. (Successful management of educational innovations. Investing in people.)* Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom.

Wideen, M.F. (1992). School-based teacher development. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change.* (pp.123-155) London: Falmer.

Wildman, T.M., Niles, J.A., Magliaro, S.G. & McLaughlin, R.A. (1989). Teaching and learning to teach: The two roles of beginning teachers. *Elementary School Journal, 89*(4), 471-493.

Yin, R.K. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods.* Newburry Park: Sage.